

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

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### 50 YEARS OF DEDICATION

Kevan Lee is the longest serving member of Wyrral Park Bowls Club Glastonbury. Many clubs have someone who has been a member for some time – but to be a member of the same club; a player and supporter for that same club and a contributor to the local and county game for 50 years is remarkable.

Kevan, who was always interested in sport joined Wyrral Park in 1971 and has never left. When he joined the Club, it was called ‘Morlands’ (Morlands from 1929-1987 and then named Wyrral Park Bowls Club in 1987). He has supported all developments, change of name, good times and bad times ever since. He became and still is a regular player. He has been on the committee, held the role of Captain and Vice-Captain, recruited new members and advised new players on their game. He can play in any position, lead, second, third or skip. “Depending whether its a league match or a competition” he explained “The quality of the other players has to be taken into account, but, I suppose on balance my preferred position in third.”

Kevan, whose Father, Eric, was a staunch supporter and player at the club was encouraged to join as he had the ability to become a good – in fact – a great player. His father and other club members recognised his ability when he joined at 15. School mates may have been playing football or cricket – but Kevan was playing regular matches and helping the Club to win. This was a family tradition – his Mother, May, also played a little – but was more heavily involved in ensuring the ‘traditional bowling tea’ was ready and enjoyed by all the players at the conclusion of hard-fought games.

Bowling is a relaxing game; but it requires concentration and good humour. Two qualities that Kevan possess in abundance.

In the early days club nights did not really exist and to learn members could attend the club at any time and play with 'whoever was around' learn the rules, good technique and gain experience. Now regular 'roll up' nights take place on Monday evenings; opportunities to learn, socialise and keep in contact with other members – also time to review recent games and the club's position in the league. There is also time to enjoy a drink or two.

Kevan remembers "facilities in the early days were basic – nothing like what's available today." "We have a club house now, with a bar. Good changing rooms and other facilities, in the early days things were limited."

Remembering his many games – some stay imprinted on his brain. Like his first competitive game. He had been selected and was playing in number two position – and showing his enthusiasm he was attempting to advise the other players on where to place their woods. The Skip (a very experienced Wally Carter) wiggled his finger at Kevan and said, "stop giving instruction, stop being so eager – calm down, keep still and be quiet." Advice that he has never forgotten.

On his second competitive game being held at Ilminster the skip was a retired farmer who continually told Kevan – "Eah, two foot through" "Eah, two foot short" "You need more g-r-a-s-s" (Not enough grass in a somerset accent takes some understanding.) All good advice that Kevan has passed onto many players over the years – albeit with more patience!

Kevan always gives easy to remember advice "I always suggest that new players watch other members play to see examples of style and in a competition – always be watchful to see the bowling line, and the

preferred length of the jack – particularly of the opposition – it’s the way to win” He said.

Kevan chuckled when recalling a team from Wales. Kevan was Captain and (as well as trying to win) – it was his responsibility to thank the visiting team for attending. Quite a tongue twister when the team was from Brynhyfryd; but he managed to do this with style.

The dress code has changed over the years and Kevan can recall wearing the customary newly pressed white shirts, club tie, grey trousers and a black blazer bearing the club badge. He was presented with the County badge and ensured that both the County Badge and the Club Badge were both proudly displayed on his blazer. “Things are more informal now” he said, “ but I can remember the discussions that took place when it was decided to wear shirts with club colours; and the discussions when mixed games between males and females began – developments that I supported.”

“I remember going on organised day visits to other areas to play. We had different opponents and could see how other clubs operated. I remember particularly going to Wales and Gloucestershire in the early days. In recent years we have gone to Weymouth, Sidmouth, Southampton etc.” He mused.

Kevan has played 11 times for The County and over 20 games for the Patrons. He has reached the County Triple Semi-Finals. He has played with and against notable local people who have gone on to be International and World Umpires – and – he laughs, “I can remember beating some of them.” He recalls one memorable away game when the rink he had been allocated was in a really awful state – on investigating the green – it appeared that only one side has been cut and watered. Kevan opted to change the rink allocated – located the best bowling line and his team went on to win. They were playing against severe opponents – some of whom were internationals. The

final end was outstanding with other players congratulating him on the precision of his game.

Although being a member of the club for so many years – it took him 46 years to qualify for the Singles Final. He played Ralph Packer (the current club president) – it was a tight game, but he won. (He is still attempting to equal his Father's record of two club singles). He has also won the Ron Cox Trophy twice and been in the final three times.

Numerous competitions have been entered and a good performance shown, The Turnbull Cup, The Wedmore Plate and the EYETECH local competition. Kevan said with pride "There were good players in these competitions, I remember getting to the semi-finals on occasions and the final of the Wedmore Plate." "I have also played in numerous league games."

Kevan can talk with great detail about so many important games during his bowling career. A career that continues - he feels he is playing at his best. He enjoys the outdoor game but also plays inside games in the winter – such is his commitment.

He can recall the Golden Jubilee in 1979 and all the special events that took place – the games against the County Executive (which included past presidents, vice-presidents, county officers etc) and The Barbarians "We played against International Players and they were top notch. A grand dinner and an amazing raffle, to which we all sold lots of tickets – and on the night my Mother won the first prize – A £300.00 Moorland Sheepskin Coat, which was specially designed and made for her."

He can also remember the Open Tournament when he was playing in the Moorland B Team. There was a game against Clevedon when he was called in as a reserve player. Unfortunately, his team did not win. They came fourth and won £4.00 each. "I say unfortunately as because we accepted money, we could not be considered for selection for the

Commonwealth games – now that would have been an experience” he said. “That was a good tournament, we played against international players and they were top notch.” “There was bowls played all day – with plenty of refreshment breaks.”

So far, he has only bowled with two sets of woods, the first set lasted fifteen years and his current set he started using in 1986. He has carried the responsibility for many matches – some good – some bad, but he always enjoys playing and is an ambassador for the game of bowls.

One abiding memory is of meeting three strangers (Ron Cox, John Grey and Eric Taylor) who appeared at the club requesting information on membership. They received a good friendly welcome. Kevan spent time with these three strangers, gave encouragement and provided information. Those three strangers became members, have been with the club for over 30 years and two are still playing today. (There is even a competition carrying the name of the Ron Cox Trophy.)

The name David Bryant means something to bowlers – but also to non-bowlers as he became a world champion. During Kevan’s early playing days, (when he was still at school,) his class was given the task of doing some research and preparing an article on current affairs. Kevan found a picture of David Bryant and stuck it in his exercise book. He also wrote a few words and then – when David Bryant was playing a local match, he managed to get his autograph on the relevant page in his exercise book. “My Teacher was very impressed.”

Kevan came across David Bryant some years later. The final of the Wedmore Plate was being held at Clevedon and David Bryant was there to present the prizes. Kevan was able to speak to him and asked if he remembered being asked for his autograph some years earlier; David thought a little and said “yes, I do.” A testament to Kevan’s interest and support of the game and the impression he gave to a well renowned and respected figure.

Kevan commented “Wyrral Park has always been a friendly club and encourages new members to come along and learn the game. “The club has always had a strong membership of all ages. We have a tradition of being a family club and I remember generations of families who have been members. I can recall some great players who I admired, some of whom went on to have county honours. We have current players who I also admire and have made a great commitment to the club. I have seen players do remarkable shots – like, once at Burnham On Sea when a new player had woods near to the ditch, much to his dismay. Dad said, “we can make use of those” and he did, and we won much to the amusement of the other team. Shots like that you never forget.”

During his career he has been presented with a number of whisky glasses. These have been presented to the best rink for Somerset. Although he likes a glass of whisky, he has never christened those glasses– not will he do so. They are much too precious.

So, what of ‘lock down’; and the prevention of play during the Covid Crisis; well, Kevan said “I have missed my games and the social contact with other players. It’s been a strange time, with no organisation or games to attend to - so I began my “bowler a day” programme.” Such is Kevan’s support for the Club and its members that he has phoned a different member each day to ensure they are safe and well. That’s the sort of person he is.

Kevan has demonstrated 50 years of dedication – and has more to offer. He has made a commitment to the game which would be hard to challenge. He has helped many to play and gain enjoyment. He has never lost his enthusiasm and intends to continue for many years to come. He has faith and conviction in the game and thinks it has a great future. Kevan is a prime example of tenacity and belief in his chosen club – Wyrral Park, Glastonbury. As he proudly says, “Not the best

player in the world, but a good one, and a Club Man through and through.”